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THE FUNCTION OF THE SCHOOL IN THE TRAINING OF APPRENTICES.

EMPLOYERS and employees in industrial pursuits are confronted by no more important question, at the present time, than that of the training of apprentices. The old form of an indentured apprenticeship has necessarily fallen into disuse, and in its place no uniform system or method has arisen. It was adapted to industrial conditions which no longer exist. The enlargement of the business unit, the increase of specialized methods, more extreme division of labor, the separation of the employer and the employee, and the growth of cities have so changed the organization of industry as to make a return to the old apprentice system impossible and undesirable.

A substitute must be devised which will give adequate training for our future shopmen and meet the requirements of modern shop practice. Labor leaders and employers generally recognize the necessity of special training and education for the future workers in the skilled trades and do not question the desirability of the end sought, but an agreement as to the best means for the accomplishment of the desired end, has not as yet been reached.

Apprenticeship is a form of education. Many young men learned their trades under skilled craftsmen in the days when each workman was an "all-round" man, when each man performed a variety of operations requiring much previous training. Today such conditions have vanished, the little shop is replaced by the large factory, and the worker, instead of producing an entire article, now makes only one small portion of it, or performs only one single operation upon it. As a result of this development of the large factory the education of skilled workers has become a difficult but important problem. At once we can agree that the factory is not well adapted to the training of apprentices; we look then to the school, which can co-operate with the shop and thus supply certain elements in the boy's training which the latter is unable to furnish under present conditions.

Great changes in industrial methods and practices make necessary correspondingly important modifications in the educational means

employed in the training of future workers. The school must adapt itself to the new situation and be prepared to take a new burden upon its already heavily laden shoulders. Our school curriculum has been greatly modified in recent years, by the changed home and industrial conditions of our people. Many new subjects have been added to meet a demand for training which no other institution was fitted to give; for example, natural science, manual training, domestic science, and physical training. These additions have increased the importance of the school, and have made it a more potent factor in the industrial and economic progress of this country. Nevertheless, after this enlargement and enrichment of the course, there seems to be a gap in our educational system not yet bridged over.

The curriculum is adapted to the boy who is not obliged to commence earning his living at an early age. If, however, he is obliged to go into the shop, the store, or the office, as soon as our compulsory-education laws permit, the benefits of free instruction are placed out of his reach except in a few isolated cases. In other words, the instruction given in the latter portion of the public-school course is accessible only to him who has sufficient funds to enable him to remain in school until the end of his eighteenth year. The boy who works must rely upon other facilities—the private night school or the correspondence school.

There are thousands of young men in our various correspondence and night schools who are receiving instruction in branches which are also found in the curriculum of the public school. This class of students ought to be reached through the agency of our schools. They know what they need, and are industrious, but the public school is not within their reach. By means of compulsory-education laws many unwilling children are forced to attend school. They are led triumphantly to drink of knowledge, while this great army of young men thirst for such instruction as will make them better artisans and better citizens.

It is frequently urged that these young workers, our future skilled artisans, desire trade and technical instruction; such training is called special education, a training for the few, and therefore should not be given a place in the public-school system which is supported by public taxation. An unprejudiced consideration of the case will, however,

reveal the fact that much of our present public-school instruction is really special, particularly that given in the high schools. It is especially valuable to one who wishes to become a lawyer, doctor, minister, or teacher, or who goes from the high school to the college. Even if this was not true, it can hardly be maintained that all taxpayers are not vitally interested in the industrial progress of this country. If it can be shown that the public-school system may do much to improve the knowledge, skill, and efficiency of our future workers, all the arguments which have been employed in regard to the support of schools by public taxation may also be used in this contention.

The schools are criticised on the ground that the teaching is not practical, and that the student entering a shop must unlearn much that has been taught him—a statement that has just enough truth in it to make it dangerous. A reason for such conditions is found in the separation in point of time of theory and practice. An abrupt and complete separation of school and business is not desirable, but at present can scarcely be avoided. The home, the shop, and the school ought to be brought closer together. If apprentices, and other young men, entering upon their life-work were given opportunity to carry on school work at the same time, as is done in Germany, we certainly should be nearer the solution of the apprenticeship question. Public night or half-day schools ought to be established in every city and town. The public school, on the one hand, and the shop, the store, or the office, on the other, should co-operate in bringing about this innovation. During the years of apprenticeship regular attendance in these schools should be required. The Brown & Sharpe Manufacturing Co. and the Baldwin Locomotive Works have well-organized apprenticeship systems, but both rely upon the assistance of private night or correspondence schools. Their apprentices are expected, and indeed, are required, to enrol in such schools.

The Baldwin Locomotive Works do not intend to give night instruction. They do intend to impart the technical knowledge. We depend upon the various night schools established throughout the city, and we pray for the establishment of more and better night schools, to give instruction for that portion of the training of the apprentices.

The best student is one who is working as well as studying—a desirable combination. There are many who are willing to subscribe

to the statement of a teacher: "No one who has ever taught a class of intelligent bread-winners will return willingly to academic teaching." A boy who is not diligent is frequently changed into a good student by taking him from school for a short period of time and placing him at work. He gets an insight into the affairs of the business world which teaches him that the school is an institution which can aid and benefit him.

Under present conditions, therefore, the school must be called upon to assist in the training of the skilled workers for our factories and machine shops. The influence of the school must be exerted toward aiding those young men who are actually engaged in earning their daily bread, but the hearty co-operation of employers, employees, and teachers is necessary. Education, not mere book learning, is the cure for many industrial evils. Much of the present labor trouble is due to the lack of proper educational facilities, and the absence of broader views and calm reasoning which are the logical results of such training.

The recent decrease in the number of hours worked per day will enable much to be done toward giving young workmen better educational facilities. Increased leisure should bring more culture and more rational means of enjoyment. Long hours of work are a sure preventive of educational and economic advancement of workers as a class. The apprenticeship question is of national importance, for our commercial and industrial supremacy depends upon a skilled body of workers, for which there is an ever-increasing demand.

The initiative should be taken by the employers and the trades unions. They realize more fully the necessity of the schools which this article advocates than our school authorities, and they are able to give valuable suggestions as to the character and quality of the training which should be given. The ordinary night school does not meet the requirements; its work is too desultory and fragmentary, and there is usually little co-ordination with the daily work of the student. The one agency which can properly meet the demand is the public-school system.

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